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ABSTRACT

The influence of the popular fitness movement on professional preparation in physical education was examined. This study sought to answer the following questions: (1) How many fitness majors, minors, non-teaching and teaching majors are offered in physical education programs in the Central District of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD)? (2) What is the frequency of fitness-related courses and hours within each of the five program areas identified as important for physical fitness professionals? (3) What is the distribution of fitness-related courses and hours between each of these five program areas? and (4) Do size of institution, source of support, and existence of graduate programs in physical education make a difference in the number of undergraduate physical fitness major programs? Content analysis was used to determine the existence of fitness major and minor programs and fitness related courses offered in selected colleges and universities (128 institutions). Results indicated that: (1) there is a minimal influence of the fitness movement on professional preparation in AAHPERD Central District schools; (2) fitness majors and emphases are more likely to be found in large institutions and/or in institutions that offer graduate programs; (3) there is evidence of the fitness movement in courses offered in the program skills/methods category, which suggests recognition of fitness-type activities for the general student; and (4) there is evidence of the fitness movement in the number of courses offered in the foundations category. (JD)

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A Content Analysis of the Influence of the Fitness Movement on Professional Preparation in Physical Education

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of the fitness movement on professional preparation in physical education. Content analysis was used to determine the existence of fitness major and minor programs and fitness-related courses offered in selected colleges and universities. Catalogs published since 1985 were examined in terms of program and course descriptions and credits awarded. The protocol followed throughout the study was that recommended by Krippendorff (1980). As a research method, content analysis has designated procedures which require unitizing the data and development of a valid and reliable recording form. A pilot study was conducted to identify valid course categories and to establish interrater reliability. Selection of the recording units was based on a review of literature to determine conventional uses of the terminology for fitness and pedagogy. After the pilot study, the recording form was revised and reliability and validity were reassessed. Categories for course offerings were refined. A content analysis of 128 colleges and universities in the nine state Central District (AAHPERD) region offering majors in physical education was completed. Descriptive statistics and Chi-square analysis of programs and courses indicated that size of the institution and presence of graduate programs were each significantly associated with the frequency of fitness programs ($p < .05$), while source of support (public or private) did not influence ($p > .05$) existence of such programs. The majority (over 50%) of physical education fitness-related courses were found in the foundations category. The next largest percentage of courses (over 40%) was found in the category of program (activities or methods) courses. Approximately 10% of all fitness-related courses dealt specifically with aspects of fitness testing, exercise prescription, program management and internships in non-school settings.

In conclusion, the content analysis revealed a minimal influence of the fitness movement on professional preparation in terms of frequency and content of fitness major and minor programs in physical education departments. One limitation of this methodology is that it fails to take into account practices within programs which have not been published. Further studies are needed to determine whether a similar pattern of influence exists within and across the other AAHPERD Districts.

Key Words: Physical Fitness, Professional Preparation, content analysis, Fitness Movement.

Introduction

Physical educators have a heritage of concern with fitness. In referring to influences of the fitness movement on professional preparation, one should ask, "Which fitness movement?" Three distinct periods of emphasis on fitness prior to the 1980's can be identified. The first was during World War I when American men were unable to pass tests for military fitness. This movement resulted in state legislation requiring physical education in the schools, and thus in the preparation of more physical education teachers. The second fitness movement took place during World War II. "National Fitness through AHPER", "Victory through Fitness", "Fitness for Today and Tomorrow", and "Fitness for the American Way of Life" were themes of national AHPER conventions, evidence of the profession's continued involvement with fitness. During this period there was minimal influence on professional preparation. The major focus was on the issue of standards for major programs. Reflecting what seems to have been a third fitness movement and the continuing concern of the profession for this aspect of physical education, entire issues of JOHPER were devoted to fitness during the late fifties.

During the 1960's the literature documents attention of the profession to its justification as an academic discipline and to identification of disciplinary areas of inquiry. The proliferation of specialized areas of study resulting from the "Disciplinary Movement" led to what has since been called an "Alternative Careers Movement" of the seventies. Such diversity within the profession has led to some major issues of professional preparation. Combined with declining enrollment of traditional students who will enter school teaching and an increased demand for what Hoffman (1985) has referred to as "commercial physical educators" is a challenge for

establishing quality control in the ever increasing number of degree programs targeted for alternative careers. Corporate fitness is one alternative career which has recently received major attention.

That there is currently a fitness movement seems apparent. What is not so obvious is the difference in this movement from previous movements. There seem to be three major differences:

1) It is a popular movement. Many people want ownership of it in one aspect or another. With this ownership goes a plethora of services offered by sometimes self-proclaimed, rather than carefully trained, professionals.

2) It is a commercial movement. People are willing to invest in clothing, equipment, instruction, and entry fees for competition.

3) It is an adult movement. Adults are making decisions to change their lifestyles, alter their diets, discontinue substance abuse and test themselves in terms of their physical potentials.

The response of the profession has been primarily in terms of programs directed at youth. Are we preparing professionals to deal with adults? Have we designed courses or programs to prepare our graduates to meet the needs created by the current fitness movement? In short, has the fitness movement influenced the professional preparation of physical educators?

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of the fitness movement on undergraduate professional preparation in physcial education. More specifically, the purpose was to determine answers to the following questions:

1. How many fitness majors, minors, non-teaching and teaching majors are offered in physical education programs in the Central District of AAHPERD?
2. What is the frequency of fitness-related courses and hours within each of five program areas identified as important for physical fitness professionals?
3. What is the distribution of fitness-related courses and hours between each of the five program areas identified as important for physical fitness professionals?
4. Do size of institution, source of support, and existence of graduate programs in physical education make a difference in the number of undergraduate physical fitness major programs?

Method

Content analysis requires six areas of planning. These are identified as unitizing, sampling, recording, analysis, validity and reliability.

Unitizing involves defining units of data, separating them along some boundary, and identifying them for subsequent analysis. There are three types of units distinguished by the function they serve. Context units limit the information that may enter the description. Recording units organize the data. Sampling units serve as the basis for the analysis.

The context units were the catalog descriptions of the major programs and the fitness-related courses offered. The recording units consisted of five categories for types of courses: foundation, program skill, assessment/prescription, program management and internship. These categories were identified from a review of literature concerning generic competencies for fitness specialists. They are categories in which one would expect to find courses if the profession is preparing fitness specialists. The sampling units were specific fitness-related courses offered.

The nine states comprising the Central District of AAHPERD were defined as the main unit of analysis. Within the nine state district, all institutions with majors in physical education were identified. Descriptions of the physical education programs for each of these institutions were obtained from their most recently published catalog since 1984-85. The sample consisted of 128 institutions from a possible 131.

Each institution was coded by state, size, name, year of catalog, public or private, graduate or undergraduate, and type of major offered. A form designed to facilitate recording and analysis was developed. Programs were analyzed by major and courses were recorded by category and credit hours for each institution. The data were analyzed using the Frequency, Crosstabs and

Breakdown programs from SPSSX (Nie, 1983). Chi-square tests of significance were used for type of major by size, source of support, and existence of a graduate program.

Validity of the data is assured if the catalog descriptions are accurate representations of program content. Stability, reproducibility and accuracy were considerations for reliability. The four diagnostics were unit, individual, single-category, and conditional reliability.

Results

1. The frequency and percentage of occurrence of the four types of programs in the 128 institutions sampled in the AAHPERD Central District are shown in Figure 1.

2. The size of the institution significantly ($X^2(6) = 22.5, p < .05$) influenced the type of programs offered. The percent of type of major offered by size of institution is presented in Figure 2.

3. The presence of graduate programs significantly ($X^2(3) = 16.6, p < .05$) influenced the type of programs offered. The percent of type of major offered by graduate and undergraduate institutions is represented in Figure 3.

4. The institutional source of support (public or private) did not influence ($X^2(3) = 6.6, p > .05$) the type of programs offered. The percent of public/private institutions offering each type of program is illustrated in Figure 4.

5. For the entire sample, 1370 courses and 3031 credit hours were found to have an identifiable fitness-related component. Over half of all courses and 67% of credit hours were in the foundations courses, while only 9.6% of courses and 16.4% of the total credit hours were found in the three fitness-specific areas. The percent of courses and credit hours, classified by course category, is found in Figures 5 and 6.

Figure 1. Type of Majors

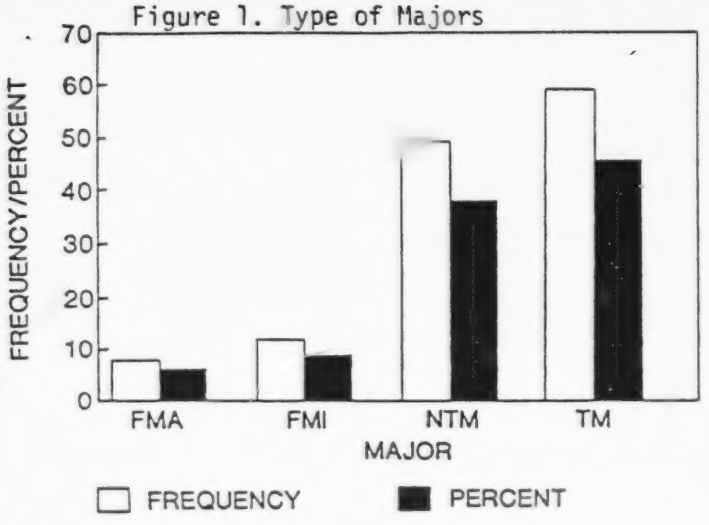


Figure 2. Percent Major by Size

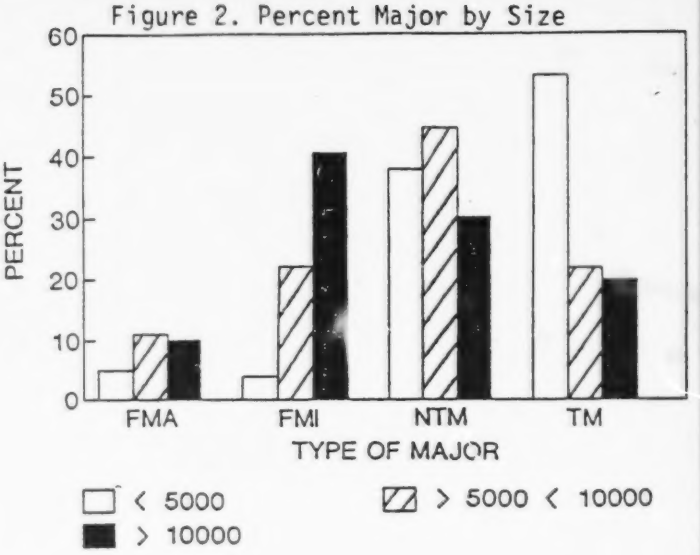


Figure 3. Programs by Graduate/ Undergraduate Institution

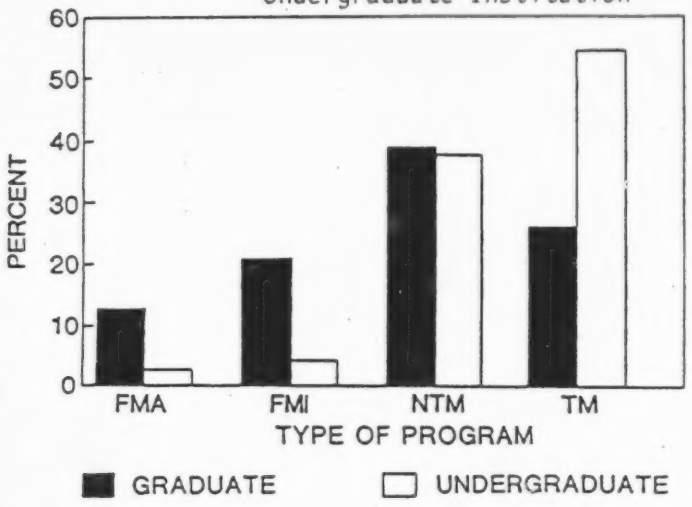


Figure 4. Source of Support

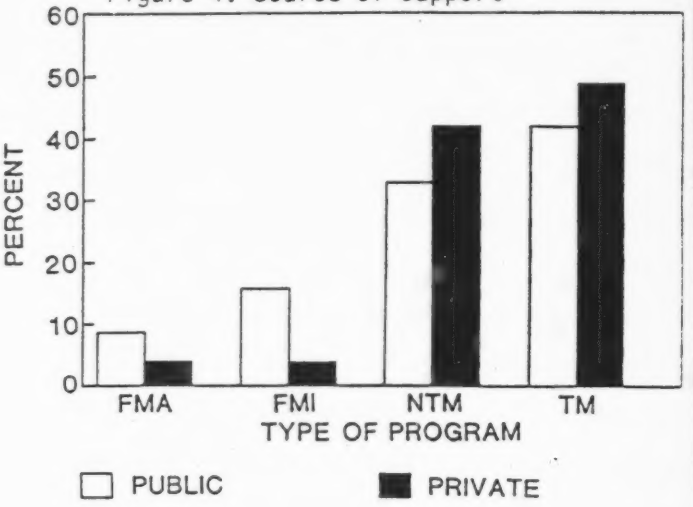


Figure 5. Percent Courses by Category

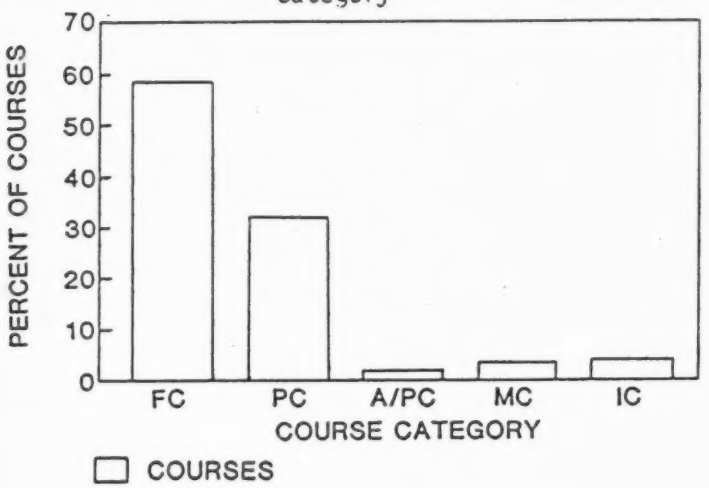
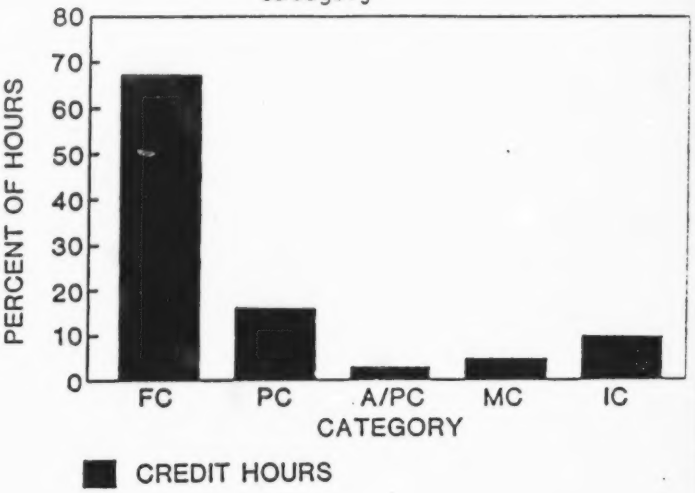


Figure 6. Percent Hours by Category



Conclusions

Content Analysis of college and university catalogs revealed a minimal influence of the fitness movement on professional preparation in the AAHPERD Central District.

Fitness majors and emphases are more likely to be found in large institutions and/or in institutions that offer graduate programs.

There is evidence of the fitness movement in the courses offered in the program skills/methods category, which suggests recognition of fitness-type activities for the general student.

There is evidence of the fitness movement in the number of courses offered in the foundations category. However, this category encompasses courses already in most programs (i.e. first aid, kinesiology, exercise physiology) and not courses designed or implemented as a result of the fitness movement.

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